

THE AWIC—LIBRARY PROJECT

IBBY—ASAHI READING PROMOTION AWARD WINNER 1991

India has a population of 800 million and children below 16 form 40 percent of the total population. By 2001 A.D. these children will constitute 392 million out of 986 million Indians. They are the potential readers of the children's books. They will be reading books from 16 recognised languages and 1652 dialects of India.

The Association of Writers and Illustrators for Children (AWIC), a voluntary organization, which is also the Indian IBBY is an active forum for the promotion and development of creative literature for children. The Association is involved in many activities. One of the activities is to inculcate reading habit in children.

If children cannot reach books, the books must reach children. The AWIC children's library project is evolved to make books available to children within their easy reach.

The AWIC Children's Library Project was launched on 9th April, 1983 by late Mr. K. Shankar Pillai, founder of AWIC and the Executive Trustee of Children's Book Trust. Initially only 9 area libraries were started by the AWIC members in their houses. Today apart from Delhi, AWIC members are running libraries in different cities of U.P., Ahmedabad, Gujarat and Maharashtra.

The AWIC library Project has extended its services to rural areas as well. In 1988, libraries for children were opened in villages.

How it started

Some of the AWIC members themselves donated old books and also collected books from their friends. Member writers and illustrators donated their books. On AWIC's request many publishers donated books

free of charge and others gave maximum discount on purchase and 1500 titles were collected.

These books were given to members who came forward to start libraries in their homes. A bag containing 150 to 200 titles, AWIC board, register, diaries for children were given to each area librarian.

The librarian works on a completely voluntary basis. He/She opens the library twice a week for at least two hours each day. On the last Saturday of the month librarians come to the central office to exchange titles.

A nominal fee of Rs. 2/- (10 US cents) per month is charged from a child who wishes to become a member. For the children of economically backward families no fee is charged. The membership money is deposited with the central office to buy more titles.

To motivate children to read and come to libraries many activities like storytelling, quiz programmes, painting competitions are organised in these area libraries.

Each young member is given a diary and the young reader is asked to write about the books he/she has read. The child's comments in the diary give a good feed back to AWIC members.

To outstation libraries, the Association provides display board, handouts, diaries on payment of fixed amount. Only 100 titles are given to outstation libraries to start a library. The AWIC helps them to purchase books from the publishers on maximum discount.

Administrative Set Up

The library committee comprises of the convener and the office bearers of the

AWIC. Other committees like accession committee, monitory committee, activating and motivating committee, help in accession, monitoring and motivating.

The AWIC launched awards called CHILDREN'S CHOICE for books in Hindi and English languages. The young readers from the AWIC libraries selected best author, best illustrator and best publisher for the prize. Thirteen prizes were awarded at the Seminar on Better Books for children organized by AWIC in November, 1989. The AWIC has decided to make this a bi-annual award.

Proposal

Considering the tremendous potential for expansion and the need to provide books to children the AWIC proposes to cover following areas:

- a. To open more libraries in villages
- b. To open children's libraries for under

privileged children living in city slums
c. To organise libraries in the children's wards of the hospitals in Delhi and other cities.

- d. To start libraries in the children's parks of cities

AWIC has a good organisational and management talent. It is planning to buy books in different languages of India, prepare kits, and other equipment needed for these libraries, i.e. diaries, pamphlets, handouts, furniture to store the books, small mobile carts or trollies to carry the books in Children Wards of hospitals. In this International Year of Literacy, AWIC children's libraries organised by AWIC are helping to eradicate illiteracy by creating the desire and providing opportunities to children to read and write. AWIC with its dedicated members will make millions of Indian children happy by bringing good books within their reach by opening more libraries.
